

The Bulletin

A PUBLICATION OF THE
CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR BAPTIST FREEDOMS



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The Bulletin is published three times a year by the Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms, formerly the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship. It is meant to be an informative magazine about Baptist concerns and news of the Church in the world.

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ON THE COVER
Alive by Mary Norton

Editorial

BY SCOTT KINDRED-BARNES

¶ I first became aware of the interplay between psychology and theology as a student at Acadia Divinity College in the late 1990s. I was one of several students in a small group session of Clinical Pastoral Education led by Dr. Dennis Veinotte. Professor Veinotte asked each student to speak about our faith and explain what had unfolded in our lives to lead us to our respective programs at the college. After others in the group had shared, I told my story of conversion to Christianity from agnosticism. After I had finished, Dennis asked a simple question that forced me to dig deeper: “That’s a good story, Scott.” He said, “Now please tell us what was really going on, inside?” It was at that point I realized that all of us have unconscious motivations and impulses at work in us. These impulses impact our lives and the lives of others. If we have been wounded, experienced grief, or have learned unhealthy patterns, we need to work through these deeper feelings to heal. Otherwise, we become slaves to our inner brokenness. From that day forward I began to interpret my past through a different lens. Each article in this edition speaks in its own way to the process of self-awareness and healing. There is no one simple one-size-fits all method in this journey of faith. As the articles affirm, God helps people to heal and find wholeness in a variety of ways.



“This is my home ... for the rest of my life ... right now!”

BY ANDY CROWELL

¶ Throughout my life the following mantra has informed my sense of place at any given time: *“This is my home...for the rest of my life...right now!”*

For me, this has affirmed both the place I am, and the spirit that brought me there, which, conversely, may also be what takes me away one day.

I am a 4th generation ordained Atlantic Baptist Minister (1988) who after serving churches and communities in the Maritimes, shifted my credentials to the United Church of Canada in 2010–11.

I then served a United Church congregation in Hamilton, Ontario for close to ten years, six of which while also serving as Ecumenical Chaplain to McMaster University.

Currently, I am Directing the University’s newly initiated *Spiritual Care and Learning Centre: for Religious, Secular, Spiritual Identities*.

My mantra was as true in 1988 when I entered my dream to become a Baptist Minister in Nova Scotia, as it is now, in Hamilton, where I am living into a new expression of that dream as Director of a pluralistic ministry in an institution of higher learning.

The common denominator for each station of my life (my sense of “home”) has never been geography or religious affiliation; rather, it has been a principle of “soul liberty”.

This “home” is one I learned wittingly and unwittingly from my Baptist heritage.

“Freedom of conscience” caused me to remain Baptist for as long as I could, before the principle—which nurtured me into its universality—became larger than the “house” in which I was presiding; it then released me from the propensity which any heritage, especially



a religious one, is capable of suppressing, when it is threatened by the very thing that gave it meaning.

For me, this guiding principle of honoring the unique autonomy of every individual life (soul) and how, or whether, it chooses to engage in spiritual practices (liberty), is a principle that when followed through to its fruition, I believe, inevitably leads to plurality.

This reality of plurality is one which appears to make Baptists both proud and nervous.

Proud, because the resonance of soul liberty is one which makes it the single greatest gift that Baptists have historically offered the human community.

Nervous, because the gift points to a truth implicit in this principle that carries us beyond the artificial limits imposed by religious hegemony.

As I continue to seek after the mysterious and wondrous qualities of soul freedom in my life presently, I have found that home is not only the place where the heart is, but heart is the place where home can only truly exist.

Richard Rohr suggests that the way in which we can come to experience the universality of love in all great traditions of wisdom, is to go deeper into our own heritage.

I am no longer a “practicing” Baptist minister, but everyday I continue to go deeper into what it means to honor “freedom of conscience”, making the work I’m doing currently... *“My home... for the rest of my life...right now.”*

Andy Crowell is the director of McMaster’s Spiritual Care and Learning Centre at McMaster University. Having served as a spiritual care provider for faith-based communities and institutional settings for more than thirty years, his experience reveals how the commonality of our human spirit has many ways to address our diverse human conditions.

Art Making as a Spiritual Practice

BY MARY NORTON

¶ Small tubs of tempura paint were laid out in a rainbow of colours. Unconventional painting tools filled a larger tub: a dishmop, plastic pot scrubber, large feathers and more. Guided by the Open Studio Process, I and five others wrote intentions, taped watercolour paper to the studio walls, and proceeded to connect with our creative selves and attend to the images that unfolded.



Then we stood back, witnessed our images, and wrote. My writing included: “You were born with a swoosh of a dish mop dipped in black paint... Did I know what you were to become? Did you? And then you were there. Dancing, rooted, alive. Yes!”

I had not set out to paint a tree.

Rooted in perspectives about spiritual practice and creativity, the Open Studio Process is based on work by Pat Allen (1995, 2016), an artist and art therapist. In her own quest to reconnect with art making as a spiritual practice, Allen identified guiding principles of Intention, Attention and Witness. These principles provided a structure for Allen and others to develop the Open Studio Process (OSP).

In setting an Intention, participants identify something they want to receive from their art making. It may be something they want to understand or change, or a more general intention such as being creative. Intentions are directed to the universe and may not be realized through the art making process. Attention includes sustained art making and following the image that unfolds. Witness writing invites participants to write freely about their experience, to deepen attention and engagement, and to listen deeply to

their inner wisdom. Witness also includes an opportunity to show one's image and read one's writing aloud, while others listen silently and without comment. This witnessing invites a deepened understanding for both the reader and the other participants and invites them to be with their images and with thoughts, emotions and sensations that might be evoked (Allen, 2016).

I have facilitated and adapted the osp with groups, in my art therapy practice and for teaching and research. Although the focus on spiritual practice varies with participants and contexts, for me the osp is always spiritually informed. While immersed in my own image making, I am supported by the presence of others and a sense of creative energy in the air. Often as I engage in silent witnessing, I am aware of a greater presence, of something more. I am not surprised when unexpected images arrive. Images such as *Alive* are a reminder of mystery and of my connection to a creative source.

The osp has been developed and adapted for various contexts since it was introduced in the 1990s. The Open Studio Project in Evanston, IL offers osp facilitator training. The Jewish Studio Project in Berkely, CA is a resource for Jewish learning and spiritual connection. Pat Allen is a faculty member and senior advisor at the JSP, which was co-founded and is directed by her daughter Rabbi Adina Allen.

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Mary Norton is an art therapist (RCAT) based in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. She holds a Master in Psychotherapy and Spirituality (Art Therapy) from St. Stephen's College in Edmonton, AB and a certificate in Open Studio Process facilitator training from the Open Studio Project in Evanston, IL. She can be contacted at heartspace.arttherapy@gmail.com

Ministry to Seniors

BY JENNIFER LONGLEY

¶ It is said that a nation is stronger when it cares for its most vulnerable and hopefully the same is true of our churches. Many are familiar with the phrase “it takes a village to raise a child” but who does it take to care for our seniors? Seldom now do adult children live with or near their parents who may be elderly or have health challenges. Families are often smaller and adult children face their own struggles and demands. Finding employment often means that families are scattered across countries and sometimes continents. Sadly, some are totally estranged from their parents or older members of their family. Other seniors didn’t have children, and many have outlived their partners or friends.



What percentage of our congregations is now invisible - those who have been active members for decades but are now unable to attend services and often have reduced incomes? Do we remember their names, can we picture their faces, do we even know where they now live? How many who can still attend are able to contribute their time, talents and offerings as they once did? Are these dear people less treasured than those we see on a regular basis and who are able to give more? If we can come up with their names, is it mainly to approach them for what they might leave to the church when they die?

In general, we are great at responding to crisis situations - heart attacks, strokes, broken limbs, new serious diagnoses, accidents, deaths in the family or passing illnesses. We visit, send flowers, cards, food and call. But when a situation lingers or a decline is due to advancing years or dementia our support tends to decrease and sadly often disappears altogether. And what of the family caregiver, very often a senior too, who faithfully supports their loved one for months or even years on end? So many seniors now live alone

and are lonely, but even those who don't often feel forgotten and no longer valued. Some need to be in care facilities away from the people and places they loved or have been forced to move due to the upkeep and cost of maintaining a house.

Ministry to our young children and youth is vitally important and rightly receives much attention and effort. We know they will be our future congregations and therefore time, programs and interest is focused on them. The church can't provide everything our seniors may need, but we can show that we care, we value them, and they are not forgotten. Some cultures revere their seniors, recognizing their wisdom and worth and expect to care for them as best they can. It means more than a once-a-year call or visit. It will take our time but our lives and that of our churches will be enriched when we see our seniors as the valued members of our church families that they are. Find out who your seniors are, spend time with them regularly, include them wherever possible and not only they but we will be blessed!

Jennifer Longley holds an MDiv degree from Acadia Divinity College. She worked for ten summers as a Cadet Chaplain with the Canadian Forces and has provided bereavement support in the Annapolis Valley for the past thirty years. For over five years Jennifer has served as Pastor of Congregational Care at Wolfville Baptist Church.

Statement & Prayer

BY THE REV. DR. RUSTY EDWARDS

NOTE: The Rev. Dr. Rusty Edwards delivered the following statement and prayer following the CABF's recommendation that licentiate Arla Johnson be ordained through First Baptist Church, Halifax. Arla appeared before a CABF Ordination Examining Council on November 15, 2022. I have left Rusty's text as written and presented.

¶In my opening statement tonight, I focused on Arla's fulfillment of the CABF standards for ordination and between Neil Ritchie and I, we highlighted the gift that Arla is to our community—to the fellowship here at First Baptist Church Halifax, and to the larger Maritime community. Rightly so, tonight we have focused on Arla as a sibling in Christ who has sensed a call to ministry and has opened herself to that calling... we have examined her gifts for ministry, her theological training, her commitment to Baptist freedoms... What is remarkable is what we have not done—we have not assumed that Arla's identity as a married, lesbian, woman in any way disqualifies her for service as an Ordained Minister.

We did not gather tonight for the purpose of making history—we're here to support our sister in Christ. And yet, I do not think we can depart without recognizing tonight as a historic moment not only for the Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms but for Baptists across Canada and much of the world. It's like every time in the Book of Acts when old barriers came down between gentile and Jew... between the cis-gendered and the eunuchs... every time barriers were broken it is acknowledged in the text—pay attention... celebrate... I almost tremble wondering if a rush of wind might knock us over any minute now (so be it if it does)...

In a time when Baptist Conventions across Canada are hardening their borders, passing new identity statements meant to exclude married couples like Arla and Julie... threatening to discipline clergy for officiating same-sex marriages... we must acknowledge that this is an important night in the life of the Baptist witness of Christ's barrier-shattering love. As an Association, we are offering the world a counter-witness to exclusion by practicing the all-inclusive love of Jesus, by acknowledging the work of Holy Spirit in the life of Arla Johnson. And so, I just have to say this... to say how grateful I am to be part of this association of Baptists... we take our heritage of freedoms seriously, we acknowledge the work of God in all people.

Arla has already come to me and said—please, share this story, share it widely... not because she is seeking attention, but because she knows so many in the LGBTQ+ community are hurting because of the messages that the church has given them... As she said, if

just one person reads her story or sees it on the news and because of that finds their way to a loving church—then it's worth it. And we here at First Baptist Church Halifax are going to do our best to share this story across Canada.

Tonight's recommendation from the Council will be going before the Congregation here at First Baptist Church Halifax on Sunday, 4 December. Pending a vote of affirmation by the congregation we will work with Arla to find a date for her ordination service—and I do hope many of you will be able to join us (in person or by live stream).

Until then ... join me in offering this Benediction: Creating God, whose winds blow over the chaos of our world to speak light and life into being... God who scooped your hands into the soil of earth to craft humanity, blowing your very life-force into our nostrils ...

God whose winds blew the waters of the sea to create a pathway from slavery to liberation...

God whose winds responded to the voice of Jesus when his friends were frightened upon the sea...

God whose winds blew upon a group of Jesus' disciples who had locked themselves up in a Jerusalem hide-out because they were afraid... blowing them out of their fear and into a world desperate for your good news of Justice-Love...

God whose winds blew upon the sails of a ship that led the Apostle Paul to break new ground for the church, establishing the first church on European soil with a business woman named Lydia who was head of her own household...

Yes, you O God—keep blowing your winds upon your church, pushing us out of the chaos we create, out of the ways we enslave ourselves and our neighbours, out of our fear-filled hideouts and into the wonder of your presence in our world and in our lives. Wild as the winds upon the sea, close as the very breath you've breathed into our lives.

God of the winds ... We especially ask this night that your Spirit-Wind fill our sister Arla Johnson as she seeks to respond to your calling upon her life. Give her the courage and vision to see the possibility of her ministry among and with us... give us, her faith community the courage and vision to receive from her and give to

her as together we seek to live out the liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Rusty Edwards is originally from the southern United States and received his theological training at Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary and the Duke University Divinity School. He has served as Senior Minister of First Baptist Church Halifax since immigrating to Canada in August 2017.

Wind and Life Defining Word

Bruce W. Neal, Water, *Wind and Life Defining Word: A Baptist Testimony* (Mississauga: BNCreations, 2022), 181 pages.

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REVIEWED BY MAE RADFORD

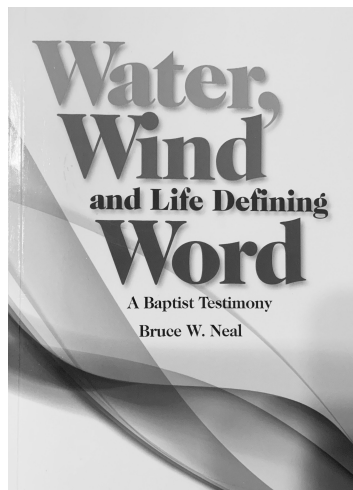
¶ The format of each chapter in this book clarifies our author's understanding of what it means to be a Baptist. This includes Bruce W. Neal's growth and development in the faith, from his boyhood days to the present. By explaining this personal journey, the author leads us to the possibility that the key to life that God has in mind for all of us is faith. He develops nine *Premises for an Understanding of Christian Life* by sharing his personal perspectives, sermons and thoughts. These include Faith is a Relationship, Church is a Gathering of Disciples, Baptism is a Witness, Communion is for Connecting, Bible is for Listening, Worship is for Praying, Freedom is for Loving, Mission is for Service and Ordination is for Commitment.

As a CABF member, I am interested in the third premise, *Baptism is a Witness*, and the seventh premise, *Freedom is for Loving*.

Baptism: He declares that Believers' Baptism is the only way for



Baptists, followed by communion and then church membership. As a young person, he believed that baptism by immersion was the outward sign of what Jesus meant to him and that Believers' Baptism was the way that Jesus was baptised. Over time, Neal progresses to a deeper awareness of baptism and church membership that for him includes communion with all believers. He remains firmly in favour of Believers' Baptism but "welcomes the testimony of life and words offered by long-time believers from another denomination to be welcomed also and celebrated".



Freedom: For Neal, an authentic Christian expresses freedom by loving. A love expressed unconditionally reaches to all of our church and beyond to other situations that we encounter. The Christian life demands going over and beyond, with selfless and serving love. As God already loves these individuals so he needs us to use the freedom to love.

His effective ministry and commitment to service are verified by Neal's faithfulness in a pastoral role and in his numerous responsibilities in CBOQ, CBOM, The Sharing Way, and interdenominational efforts, such as the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

In conclusion, I suggest that this book could be used as a resource for group study sessions. Also, one considering a call to ministry or applying for ordination may find this book valuable in understanding the journey ahead. The book is an excellent account of a life dedicated to ministry.

Beginning as a registered nurse in the hospital, then in later years, in community health and support services, along with more than 1800 volunteers, Mae Radford served as Manager, Volunteer Services, at VON Hamilton. In retirement years, she served on the Boards of Joseph Brant Hospital

and Carpenter Hospice, and initiated a program to serve socially-isolated older adults. She has a nursing diploma from Atkinson School of Nursing, Toronto Western Hospital and Bachelor of Arts, York University. Mae is married to Bert and is proud of their two daughters, Carol and Marilyn, and four grandchildren.

CABF News

☛ REV. DR. RUSTY EDWARDS, Chair of CABF's Credentials Committee, has announced exciting news: Alberta Vital Statistics has recognized the CABF as a religious body whose credentialed clergy can be granted licenses to marry! This means that our newest member congregation, First Baptist Edmonton, can have clergy accredited by the CABF and recognized by their government. CABF has had this designation in NS for the last decade and is actively pursuing the same thing in other provinces.

☛ On November 15 a CABF Ordination Council met at First Baptist Church Halifax and unanimously recommended to this Church that LIC. ARLA JOHNSON be ordained to Christian Ministry. Congratulation Arla! Arla's ordination will take place on April 2, 2023 (Palm/Passion Sunday) at First Baptist Church Halifax at a time to be announced.

☛ The Wolfville Legion, now undertaking extensive renovation of its building on Main Street, Wolfville, plans to honour its former Chaplain by naming its new library the 'Roger Prentice Library.' The Library will also serve as the Legion's counselling room. Learn more about this project and how you can support it by calling 902-542-9184.

One Month to Spring

BY STEVEN SLIPP

There's a certain quality of light
that polishes and shines the sky
and rings the air alive with birdsong
this is the expanding time of year

The sun has heat and comes back
in our windows when it moves
Northwest and climbs up overhead
It paints the clouds and melts the gray away

It's a welcome sense and feels
like a rare trick or accomplishment
for doing little but absorbing
the radiance of warming days

I've been here many years before
the equinox's finish line ahead
when the shuttered farm market sign
announces Spring is in four weeks

The patient season is rewarded
once the last wood pile is depleted
the South-facing blinds need closing
to enable the daily news to be read

When we realize we've tread
the length of another long winter
the sun runs loudly like a river
taking the crusty and crystal ice away



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